

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 EB-11 XMB-07 OPIC-12 AID-20

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /172 W

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R 0900Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5099

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS QQU

USDOC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1164

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, GB

SUBJ: TRANSGABON RAILROAD: TALK WITH FAC REPRESENTATIVE
LIBREVILLE

ABIDJAN FOR WARCDO

YAOUNDE FOR RDO

USDOC FOR STEPHEN CONGER

REF: LIBREVILLE 1100

1. DURING FRIENDLY CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR OF FRENCH
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAC) DUMONTET DECEMBER 21, SOME OF MY
SUSPICIONS VOICED IN PARA 4 REFTEL APPEAR TO BE BORNE OUT.

2. DUMONTET CONFIRMED THAT VION WOULD BE REPLACED AND
THAT GABON AD ASKED FRENCH TO FIND A REPLACEMENT. HE
STRESSED THAT THIS WAS EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL AND THAT
VION HIMSELF DID NOT KNOW ABOUT IT YET. (MY OWN SOURCES
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WERE CABLE FROM USMISSION EC BRUSSELS AND PERSONAL COMMENT BY PRESIDENT BONGO HIMSELF CITED REFTEL. DUMONTET SAID (WITHOUT GIVING DETAILS) THAT FRENCH AGREED WITH NECESSITY TO REPLACE VION BUT WERE FINDING IT VERY HARD TO FIND SOMEONE TO TAKE HIS PLACE. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE SOMEONE OF STATURE WITH CONSIDERABLE RAILROAD EXPERIENCE AND FRENCH AD NOT YET, ACCORDING TO DUMONTET, FOUND RIGHT PERSON.

3. WHEN I RAISED AGAIN MATTER OF CONSULTING ENGINEER, DUMONTET AGAIN AGREED THAT THIS WOULD BE NECESSARY, THAT SUCH FIRM WOULD OF COURSE WORK FOR GOG, AND AGENT OF GOG WOULD BE OCTRA S HERETOFORE. THERE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE NO NEED TO EXPAND OCTRA TO 60 PERSONS AS ENVISAGED BY VION AND OCTRA COULD CONSIST OF HANDFUL OF EXPERTS INASMUCH AS THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE GABONESE, ACCORDING TO DUMONTET, WHO REALLY UNDERSTOOD DETAIED PROBLEMS OF RAILROAD.

4. WHEN I RAISED QUESTION OF SELECTION OF FIRM, DUMONTET WAS AGAIN EVASIVE BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THIS TIME THAT HE WAS WELL AWARE OF PROPOSED CONSORTIUM INCLUDING TAMS AND SOFRERAIL. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT FRENCH POSTION WAS THAT FED (NOT FRENCH) SHOULD SELECT FIRM AND THAT IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO HAVE FIRM WITH AS WIDE INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION AMONG DONORS AS OSSIBLE. I POINTED OUT THAT IT SEEMED TO ME TOTALLY UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT A CONSORTIUM OF ENGINEERING IRMS TO INCLUDE FOUR OR FIVE NATIONALITIES MUCH LESS PRESENTATIVES OF ALL DONOR COUNTRIES. DUMONTET CONCEDED VALIDITY OF THIS ARGUMENT BUT RETURNED TO POINT THAT TI WAS UP TO THE FED TO DECIDE. AS ENVISAGED BY FRENCH FED WILL PRESUMABLY MKE PROPOSAL (PUSHED BY FRENCH) WHICH WILL THEN BE ACCEPTED BY PRESIDENT BONGO.

5. COMMENT: I AM SOMEWHAT DISTURBED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT AS FED MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO BRING IN GERMANS AND ITALIANS AND HAS, OF COURSE, NO PARTICULAR REASON T INCLUDE ANY AMERICAN FIRM. ACCORDING TO DUMONTET, NO ENGINEERING FIRM OR GROUP OF FIRMS HAS YET BEEN SELECTED BUT HE IMPLIED THAT GROUP CONSISITING OF TAMS AND TWO FRENCH FIRMS SEEMED A LITTLE RESTRICTIVE. AS INDICATED REFTEL, I HAVE

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EXTOLLEDVIRTURES OF TAMS AND STRESSED ADVANTAGE TO GABON OF HAVING AMERICAN FIRM INCLUDED IN ENGINEERING CONSORTIUM. I WILL PLAN TO RAISE MATTER PERSONALLY WITH PRESIDENT BONGO AT NEXT OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE THESE ARGUMENTS. ADIDJO, BOKASSAAND NGOUABI ALL ARRIVED TODAY FOR UDEAC MEETING AND I MAY NOT GET CHANCE TO HAVE SUBSTANTIVE MEETING WITH BONGO FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

6. RECOMMEND: IF TAMS HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO, SUGGEST THAT THEY SEND DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT BONGO ADDRESSED T PRESIDENCY COMPLETE SET OF BROCHURES AND OTHER PERTINENT MATERIAL SHOWING CALIBER OF FIRM AND EXTENT OF ITS EXPERIENCE. WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL IF IDENTICAL SET OF MATERIAL WAS SENT TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE. MCKESSON

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